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ABSTRACT

The author discusses the steady increase in white student enrollment at historically black colleges. These students are generally categorized as: (1) being older; (2) having completed military service; (3) having little interest in student activities; (4) being married; (5) being transfer students; and (6) attending as part-time commuter students. Among the attracting forces are: (1) proximity; (2) convenience; (3) adaptability; (4) program availability; and (5) easy entrance requirements. Apprehensions of the white students, their interpretations of their experiences at black colleges, and the reactions of black students to their fellow white students are presented and analyzed. Particularly interesting are the positive and adverse impact that reverse integration has on black students as well as the possibilities that such an environment can have on the racial attitudes of black and white students. (Author/VG)

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WHITE STUDENTS IN BLACK INSTITUTIONS

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For

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Introduction

A little known phenomenon, which has already reached significant proportions, is the increased enrollment of white students on black campuses. A limited number of institutions and researchers have focused their attention on studying this recent trend. Today, I will share with you some of their findings as they relate to 1) the extent of white enrollment at the one hundred and seven (107) historically black colleges, 2) the characteristics of the white minority students, 3) the motivation of white matriculants for attending black colleges, 4) the reaction of the white students to their intercultural experiences and education, 5) the response of the historically black colleges and black students to their new clientele, and 6) the attitudes and attitudinal changes of both the black and white students.

White Enrollment on Black Campuses

The white enrollment on some historically black college campuses has been relatively small; at a few campuses, it is significantly large; on others, the increase of white students has been of such magnitude that it has changed the colleges into predominantly white institutions. Some colleges, such as Howard University which began admitting white students in the 1870's, have had a long tradition of having white students. For the most part, however, the significant increase of integration in reverse occurred after three historic rulings - the 1954 Supreme Court decision, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the HEW Legal Defense Suit (Adams versus Richardson) of 1973.

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Applications by white students for admission to black professional schools, such as the schools of law, medicine and dentistry of Howard University, have been particularly heavy. However, some undergraduate institutions, such as Bowie State College, Delaware State, and Kentucky State have had large increases in their undergraduate white enrollment, ranging from twenty (20) to forty (40) percent. Three institutions, West Virginia State, Lincoln University (Missouri) and Bluefield State (West Virginia) have already become predominantly white institutions. In the aggregate, according to an Institute for Services to Education study (1975), of the 109,414 students enrolled in predominantly black colleges and universities, 8,380 or 7.65 percent are white.

Characteristics of White Students at Black Colleges

Studies delineating the profile of white students on black campuses generally agree that these students are older, have finished their military services, are married with families, are transfer students, are employed, and for the most part attend part-time as commuters. Both a study of Racial Integration in the Maryland State Colleges (1969) and a study on White Students Enrolled in Eighteen Traditionally Black Southern Colleges by Charles I. Brown (1973) of Fayetteville State University in North Carolina found that most white students live near the college or university they attend. They usually fall in the twenty-one and above age group.

The Institute for Services to Education study (1975) found that in seventy-three (73) historically black colleges surveyed in 1973, white students composed a greater proportion of the part-time than of the full-time enrollment. Of the 96,784 full-time students, 93.3 percent were black, 4.4 percent were white, and 2.0 percent were foreign. However, of the 12,630 part-time students, 64.2 percent were black, and 32.4 percent were white.

Motivation of Whites in Attending Black Colleges

Why do white students enroll at black colleges? What is their motivation? Proximity, convenience, adaptability of education to the life-style of the white student, program availability, and easy entrance requirements explain why most white students attend black colleges. Many of these students, because of military obligations, early marriages, and possibly poor grades, delayed their college education,but now must flexibly adapt college study to their work and family obligations. Charles I. Brown (1973) found that the white students arrived at the traditionally black college with goals firmly fixed, and their decision to enroll was based upon rational thought and sound economic judgment.

The Maryland study (1969) reported, however, that some white students made their choice of a predominantly black college for philosophical reasons. Some were interested in experiencing a minority status. Others were interested in fulfilling the objective of racial understanding. Yet others had a desire to appear unprejudiced or wished to attract attention to themselves.

Ida R. Stevens (1976), Dean of Students at Bowie State College, in studying the beliefs of white students enrolled in five predominantly black institutions concerning housing and student activities, found that the white students attend the black college primarily to get an education. They had a serious attitude toward their education and apparently were not there to participate in social or extra-curricular activities.

Reaction of the White Students on the Black Campuses

It appears that the white students attending black colleges were initially apprehensive; have been accorded a decidedly warm and positive reception; have, periodically, unpleasant experiences, including occasional experiences of black racism; and, at times,

are harassed by their own family and friends. The Stevens report (1976), showing that the students have a strictly serious attitude toward their education and leave immediately after classes are over, may indicate the lack of comfort of these students in a majority black environment. Indeed, the report explicitly elicited the reaction that some students shun student activities out of fear of ridicule, harassment or lack of acceptance. However, the experiences of those who do participate is that their apprehension was unfounded.

Another indication that the whites on black campuses are uncomfortable with their minority status is the extent to which they express a desire for more white students. In a recent Survey of the College Environment conducted by the Division of Student Affairs at Bowie State College, 59 percent of the white students polled felt that the College should actively recruit more white students whereas a smaller percentage (19 percent) felt that the College should actively recruit more black students. In the Institute for Services to Education study, it was reported that most white freshmen entering Bowie State College in 1971 felt that the ideal college should be one-half black and one-half white. Other survey findings, such as those indicating that white students feel that the presence of white faculty on campus symbolizes the College's acceptance of white students, suggest that white students are seeking ethnic changes in the composition of black colleges in order to create an environment which is more comfortable for them.

The literature indicates that white students appear satisfied with the academic offerings of black colleges. In the study of the College Environment conducted by the Division of Student Affairs at Bowie State College, 68 percent of the white respondents indicated that most courses were challenging in that they required extensive outside preparation and intensive study. In addition, a large percentage (72 percent) agreed with the statement "Most faculty here really care about the students."

Stevens' study also bears out this positive view of educational opportunities. The majority of students in her study agreed that the institutions fostered a climate for learning and that the administration, faculty, and students desired an intellectual climate. They further indicated that most of the faculty presented well-prepared subject matter. They felt that the instruction generally met the needs of the students within the framework of course objectives. The students also found the institutional services for academic advisement, financial assistance, and personal counseling quite adequate.

One finding of the Maryland study (1969) dramatically summarizes the positive reaction of the white student to his black college experience. In reply to the question, "On the whole, do you feel you made the right decision in attending a black college?", 80 of the 83 students interviewed replied affirmatively.

The Impact of White Students on Black Campuses

Although white students appear not to want special provisions made for them on black campuses, these campuses, in fact, have made some significant changes in order to accommodate the new clientele. Personnel have been added to specialize in recruiting and counseling white students. Human relations program have, at times, been held to effect a multiracial consciousness. Special honors programs have been instituted to meet the needs of well-prepared whites. Also important, numerous programs have been added to the existing curricula, in part to respond to the needs of white students.

The State of Maryland has instituted an Other-Race Grant Program (ORGP) designed to assist students who qualify to attend one of the State Colleges where members of their race are in the minority. This program has contributed to the success of recruiting and retaining white students on black campuses, as well as to the success of enrolling black students on white campuses.

The increase in the number of honors-type programs on black campuses has been concurrent with an increase in white enrollment. These concurrent events are correlated and undoubtedly each has had an influence on the other. However, they are not directly linked causally, since black colleges have for a number of years offered programs especially designed for black students with high ability or academic potential. Dr. John Clovis (1973) of the Division of Behavioral Science Research of Tuskegee Institute found that among sixty-four (64) historical black colleges in the Southeast, forty-three (43) or sixty-seven (67%) percent offered at least one special program of academic enrichment for students with high potential, and that these programs had existed on their campuses for several years. The types of programs offered were honors programs, honors sections, independent study, credit by examination, tutorials, and field experiences.

The appointment of integration personnel in the various colleges in Maryland is a direct institutional response of these institutions to meet the needs of other-race students on campus. As a part of the State's desegregation plan, integration coordinators are charged with the primary responsibility of recruiting other-race students, and integration counselors are employed to assist these students in adjusting to their new environment.

Human relations seminars and workshops are a specific institutional response to other-race students. Bowie State College, for example, was awarded a grant in 1973 under Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965 which provided for a series of seminars to promote better understanding between the races. The program focused on assisting students to adjust to the interracial environment of the Bowie campus. The most recent workshop at Bowie was sponsored in the Spring of 1976 by the Student Affairs Division, exploring the

topic "Self Awareness: An Approach to Multiracial Consciousness." Coppin State College of Baltimore has conducted a series of workshops dealing with the problems of racial prejudice in our society. The major thrust of the workshop was to provide an open forum for effective dialogue among members of the college community in its quest for harmonious integration.

Reaction of Black Students to White Students on the Black Campuses

Black students have in general reacted positively to their fellow white students. As indicated earlier, whites report that in general they have been accorded a warm reception. In fact, black students are, for the most part, friendly to the whites. If not overly friendly, they are, at least, indifferent to the white influx. Little or no hostility has been observed among blacks, even to the disproportionate number of whites on the Dean's List or on the list of those who are graduated with honors.

There are indications, however, that integration in reverse occurring too rapidly can create an adverse reaction on the part of blacks. There are two reasons for this. Blacks fear the loss of an institution that preserves their cultural heritage. Many black students look to the predominantly black colleges as institutions that are aware of and have an understanding of their heritage as black people, a heritage which is not particularly well projected by white institutions. Rapid and sudden changes in the racial composition of these institutions cause black students to perceive that a black institution is fading away before their very eyes and, thus, a part of their cultural heritage is being taken away from them.

A second reason that a rapid change in the racial composition of the black college might cause an adverse reaction is that black students feel they are being pushed out, and, thereby, deprived of an education. Oddly enough, it can be demonstrated that the per-

centage increase of white students is accompanied by an absolute increase in the number of black students served in the historically black colleges. Concurrently an even greater number of black students are being educated in other predominantly white institutions of higher education. In brief, the total education of blacks can be shown to have expanded. Nevertheless, the rapid increase in the number of white students on the black campus can create the impression among black students that they are being pushed out. This impression, though not based on fact, is as significant in causing an adverse reaction as if, in fact, it had been true.

Attitudinal Changes

What attitudinal changes occur, if any, among the white students as a result of being on a predominantly black campus? What attitudinal changes occur, if any, among the black students as a result of having an increasing number of whites, as minorities, attend college with them? It is impossible to answer these questions with precision. The limited research findings available, however, do suggest that a historically black college with white minority students constitutes an environment that has a positive impact on the attitudes of black students and white students toward each other.

In 1971 a racial attitude scale was devised and administered to 238 students at Bowie State College (Elam, 1972). The study group consisted of 149 (63%) black and 89 (37%) whites. The sample was relatively consistent with the total racial composition of the Undergraduate College at Bowie, (blacks 72%, whites 28%). The instrument consisted of two parts; the first part included fifty-one (51) attitudinal statements which surveyed students' beliefs and feelings about members of both races, black and white. Items centered around questions relating to the intelligence, attitudes, habits, and other characteristics of both races. The second part included statements pertaining to students' contacts with the other race before and after attending Bowie State College.

The results of the study showed that there were significant differences in the racial attitude of blacks and whites and that these differences were related to age, pre-college contact and college contact.

The results clearly indicated that the racial attitudes of whites were more positive than blacks and that older black students (over 24) had a more positive attitude than younger blacks.

A further analysis revealed that white students perceived characteristics of blacks very much as did blacks, and blacks and whites perceptions of whites were similar. Response to the statement, "Differences between blacks and whites in intelligence and scholastic aptitude are caused more by environmental factors than genetic factors," indicated agreement by 93 percent of both black and white students. A majority of blacks (91.3%) and whites (96.6%) agreed that blacks are capable of holding top leadership positions in this country. The majority of students in both groups (blacks, 81.8%; whites, 95.5%) endorsed the statement, "Blacks and whites have similar needs and desires." Approximately 89 percent of the blacks and 98.8 percent of the whites disagreed with the statement, "It is usually a mistake to trust a person of another race."

There were several items in which there was a wide disparity of agreement. The statement, "Most blacks hate most white people," received endorsement by 28.8 percent of the blacks and only 9.9 percent of the whites. When the statement was reversed, 51 percent of the blacks agreed that most whites hate most black people as compared with 13.5 percent of the white students. Response to the statement, "Whites actually fear blacks," indicated agreement by 69.1 percent of the black students and only 38.2 percent of the white students. When the statement was reversed, 13.4 percent of the blacks and 20.2 percent of the whites indicated agreement. A majority of black students (65 percent) agreed with the statement, "Whites tend to come across to blacks as condescending in their attempt to promote equality," as compared with the small percentage of white

students (3.4 percent) who agreed. However, approximately the same proportions of both groups (blacks, 52 percent; whites, 54 percent) believed that "Blacks tend to come across as bold and disrespectful in their attempt to gain equality."

In reference to pre-college and college contact and racial attitude, it was found that those students who had a high degree of college contact had a significantly higher racial attitude score than those with limited pre-college and college contact.

These findings indicate that the experience of being a white minority on a black campus has a positive impact on the attitudes of blacks toward the whites and an even more positive impact on the racial attitudes of whites toward blacks.

A White Student's Recollections of his Experience on a Black Campus

The underlying factors relating to the attraction of a white student to a black college, his matriculation, enrollment, and graduation from that college and the poignant experiences the student had as a white minority are all vividly summarized in an interview with one of the first white graduates from Bowie State College. This student entered Bowie in 1962. The interview which follows was transcribed by C. C. Hatcher (1977), Director of the Student Union & Student Activities at Bowie State College.

The summary of the interview is as follows:

> The story you are about to hear is the best recollection of my three years at Bowie State College. After I graduated from high school, I went to Northeastern University in Boston on a football scholarship, majoring in civil engineering, but after several months of problems, involving my father's illness, my lack of interest in continuing to play sports and my declining grades, I withdrew from the University in January, 1962. I came back to Maryland, but was not interested in going to the University of Maryland because they kind of snubbed me for my football talents. I always felt that Maryland was too large. I wanted to go to a small school because I had been in a small school all my life, so I decided to go to one of Maryland's community colleges. I visited the community college of my choice, met the Dean, and was admitted on probationary status because of my poor grades. I didn't like the people there too well; they didn't seem to take much interest in me.

About a week before school started in September, I went in for a visit with my dentist, Dr. Jones (an assumed name), who was then a part-time instructor at Bowie State College. Bowie was a new community. My parents had moved there in February, 1962, and supposedly Bowie was the community of the future. I talked with Dr. Jones for a while and told him part of my story and he said, "Why don't you to to Bowie? Bowie's got a nice campus, a nice school, small. About the only problem is that they have almost all black students there." The one big attraction I think that Dr. Jones had talked about was the financial end. In those days all you needed to do was sign a certificate saying that you would teach in the State of Maryland for two years, and you went tuition free. So my total cost of education at Bowie not including books was $25.00 for the first semester and $10.00 for the second semester. I was told by Dr. Jones that there were about 300 students there, all black, but they were expecting an enrollment of about 60 white students. I had little or no reservation about entering Bowie, because I had been around black people most of my life. So I decided to enroll at Bowie State for my first two years and then possible transfer to the University of Maryland.

When I enrolled at Bowie for my freshman term, there were two whites and about 310 black students. The administration was cordial and the teachers who were responsible for orientation and admissions did everything to make me feel comfortable. Nine additional white students registered the second semester. It was a mixed group of individuals, women in their 40's, and a couple of young people. We were all there for the same thing - to get an education.

My freshman year was marked by several interesting developments. I went out for the basketball team; I was made co-captain of the team and started almost every game. When we played Millersville (Pa.) the situation was reversed - Millersville had eleven (11) whites and one (1) black; Bowie State had eleven (11) blacks and one (1) white - me. I remember going to the black campus at Cheyney State where I was treated very warmly. Cheyney was doing the same thing, they were also experiencing "integration in reverse." I remember noticing that all the black people sat together and those who were dating interracially had their own little corner. During one practice session, I encountered a black student who didn't like the idea of my going out for the team. He called me a "white honkie" and used some abusive language. A couple of the guys took him aside and calmed him down. Over the next three years this fellow and I became pretty good friends; he and I came to understand each other a little better. I became very close with some of the other guys too.

My mother told me a couple of years ago that she was very concerned that I would end up marrying a black. My parents feel that there are great differences between whites and blacks. My sister, who also attended Bowie, has been dating a black for a number of years. This has greatly affected my mother. It has, at times, led to some conflicts within the household.

I remember the teachers at Bowie as some of the best teachers I have ever had in my life. The classes were small and we got to know each other. I felt that my English program was very, very strong. Dorothy Smith, an English teacher helped to guide me. Dr. Martha Putney turned me on to history which I had hated in high school. Her classes were both challenging and very difficult. I did everything I could to get an "A", and I finally did after four shots.

Dr. William E. Henry, the President at the time, was one person I don't think I'll ever forget; he was the first one who brought me in. I now know they were using me to help the college gain things that it had been denied by the Maryland State Legislature. I guess this classic example of what "separate but equal" had meant in our society since 1896 was exhibited before me.

Looking at Bowie, I can see the tremendous changes. I will always feel that I was one of the spearheads that helped. Bowie gave me everything I wanted. No one has ever knocked me for going to Bowie. Dr. Wiseman, a professor, walked me into the University of Maryland Graduate School and I earned honor grades. Hopefully, someday, I will finish my doctoral dissertation.

Summary

In summary, the enrollment of white students at black colleges has steadily increased in recent years. Those who attend are generally older, have completed their military service, are married with families, have little interest in student activities, are transfer students, are employed, and for the most part attend part-time as commuters. Proximity, convenience, adaptability of education to the life-style of the white student, program availability, and easy entrance requirements explain the motivation of white matriculants for attending black colleges. Although some white students have reservations or apprehensions about enrolling in black colleges, they indicate that their experiences (educationally and socially) are decidedly positive. Black colleges have responded to the new white clientele by adding new programs to the existing curricula, employing white faculty and counselors, and providing human relations programs. Black students have in general reacted positively to their fellow white students; however, there are indications that integration in reverse occurring too rapidly can create an adverse reaction on the part of blacks. It, also, appears that the environment of the historically black campus has a positive impact on the racial attitudes of both black and white students.

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